BOOKS and AUTHORS ❀ REVIEWS and COMMENT

VIEWS AND REVIEWS OF CURRENT FICTION

Owen Johnson's Study of a New Form of Parasitism—Welcome Mr. Ade—More Stories of the West—International Episodes.

PARASITES.

THE SALAMANDER. By Owen Johnson. Illustrations by Everett Shinn. 12mo, pp. 429. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

The author's portentously sociological "foreword"—portentous word itself rather overweights the significance of his novel, which, after all is said, is nothing more than a picture of one of the many phases of the life of Broadway, long familiar to all observers of the kaleidoscope of our large city, but certainly a novelty in our fiction. Mr. Johnson chooses to see in "The Salamander," as he calls her, a curious first product of the economic independence of women, destined to have a great influence upon the next generation. In reality she is nothing but a new sort of parasite, more insensately and deliberately parasitic, economically more debasingly dependent upon man than any other variety of the species the earlier social order has ever produced. She is a sort of female *chevalier d'industrie*, ready to accept, for the sake of the luxuries of life or the advancement of her interest, many humiliations and insults; ready, also, to practice any sort of duplicity, to be misunderstood and suspected, resolved only to remain technically an "honest woman," as the English have it. Her acquaintance with men almost invariably begins with a misconception on their part, set right with a great show of offended dignity on hers. Thereafter it is all more or less plain sailing. She manages to pay her room rent and her meagre breakfasts, and for the rest relies upon the men she knows for luncheons, dinners and suppers, theatres, the use of automobiles (with chances from the chauffeurs); and, to keep herself in pretty clothes, she sells the costly presents she receives from shopkeepers for a fraction of their cost. It is part of the Salamander's code never to accept presents of money.

Sometimes this parasitism tides her over lean days to the beginnings of a career; occasionally, but rarely, she loses her head; far more seldom still, according to Mr. Johnson, does she cross the danger line and is lost. At the very least she marries, more or less wisely and well, for throughout she manages to retain her self-respect and her belief in her own better possibilities. It is a new *demi-monde*, using the word in Dumas's original sense, brought into being to some extent, no doubt, by woman's emancipation, but far more by the American man's attitude toward women. "To a European," says Mr. Johnson, "the Salamander is incomprehensible."

The type, as the author presents it in several of his minor characters and in his own comment, is a more interesting social study than is the individual case of his heroine, which, of course, runs the whole gamut of this new variety of feminine parasitism. Her adventures are almost too many and too amorous, one never quite sees why this socially raw and intellectually unformed girl from a small town exercises so potent an influence over so many men of achievement, culture and power. It is over her that is waged in this time the great Wall Street war that has become part and parcel of our more or less authentic fictional history of the malefactions of great wealth—a battle between a multi-millionaire and a great newspaper proprietor. A city magistrate, a man of exceptionable standing and principles, is all but ready to defy the world for her and with her; she returns a wreck of well-born dissipation with all the dangers, temptations and opportunities of the life present themselves to her until, distracted, utterly beyond self-control, she is saved from herself.

It is a curious study, and an unpleasant one, which one classes rather with what the French call the *roman de mœurs contemporains* than with anything in American fiction. Mr. Johnson makes much, in the case of his heroine, of the modern young woman's purely intellectual curiosity to explore life, but that factor, one is inclined to believe, is only a minor incentive of the type as a whole. One also doubts whether the intense seriousness with which the author's men take this Salamander of his is true to type. Is it not rather the casual way with which our men take her kind that enables it to play its little game at all? These be, however, the shortcomings of fiction as social criticism. It must be dramatic.

JUST GEORGE ADE.

ADE'S FABLES. By George Ade. Illustrated by John McCutcheon. 16mo, pp. 297. Doubleday, Page & Co.

One does not review a new volume of George Ade's fables, least of all does one think of comparing its contents with those of earlier ones. Sufficient unto the moment are the slang and humor and the wisdom thereof. We begin to read without reservation whatsoever, and are his once more the moment he tells us of "The Flower of America's Young Womanhood out in the Ozone, walking four abreast with Shining Faces, and pushing white-haired Business Men off into the Sweepings." Later on, one of these Elfins of the Young Unmarried Set entertains four young men, and "has to bat up short and easy ones for this Bunch, as they are from the Wholesale District." Then there is the convivial clubman whom a railroad accident maroons among a family of New England farmers fanatically given to total abstinence:

> At the Cocktail hour he ventured a Request for any one of the standard Necessaries of Life, but Mrs. Peabody read him a passage from the Family Medicine Book to the effect that Liquor was never to be used except for Snake Bites. When he ordered the Hired Hand to bring him a large Snake, they gave him a Sleeping Powder and told inquiring Neighbors that he was still Out of his Head.

And there is, further, the multi-millionaire who was "what you might call Honest, which signifies that all of his Low Work had been done by Agents"; and the commercial theatrical manager who tells the author and the composer of a highly literary, highly musical musical comedy that "the Simp that pushes his Metal into the Box Office wants Something Doing every minute and many Gals, otherwise it is back to the Storehouse and a Card in the Clipper"; and Elphye, the actress who "had a good Social Position back at her Home, but, for some reason, she never sent for it." But why continue? And the moral? It is there, at the end of each fable, its full justification and more.

CIRCUS FOLK.

THE DESERT AND MRS. AJAX. By Edward Moffat. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 334. Moffat, Yard & Co.

The circus, as befits its place in our affections, is one of the happiest traditions of American fiction. Here it comes again, or, rather, here it is, at the very beginning of this story, stranded in a small town in the Nevada desert. The town has no time for circuses, for news has come of a gold strike near by. So the artists become very domestic on the ranch of the fortunate owner of the mine, who takes pity on them—Mrs. Ajax, the strong woman, whose given name is Imogene, and who overflows with womanly tenderness; Cobrita, the snake charmer; the two Italian acrobats, who are really Irishmen; the ponies, the elephant, and, last and most important, Clarice, the best trapeze performer in the business. She is the heroine. From an altogether different social stratum come the Philadelphia millionaire who is the ranchman's partner in the mine; his wife, his son, and his niece. It is a delight to see the pater slough off the "side" his wife has put on him and become just a plain American; and as for her, Mrs. Ajax and the rest put her in her place, even as they dispose in short order of the Mormon bishop who arrives post-haste to recruit plural wives for the Church. The tale is not all humor, however, for where there is gold there is a villain—and such a villain in this case, with many scores against him! The scene in which Western private justice is pronounced upon him grips. There is a murder mystery, another concerning the heroine's paternity more than one love affair, assorted Western characters—plenty of mixed material to keep the interest going. Mr. Moffat is a newcomer. His story has all the freshness of a good first venture.

MORE WESTERN ATMOSPHERE.

THE FULL OF THE MOON. By Caroline Lockhart. Illustrations by Charles H. Stephens. 12mo, pp. 267. Philadelphia: The J. B. Lippincott Company.

Miss Lockhart shows us the West without the traditional glamour. The quality of its chivalry is very much strained in this story, whose happenings and characters serve to bring an Eastern girl to her senses. She, too, has claimed her year of liberty before marrying, but, instead of seeking life in the vortex of great cities, has elected to see it in a stagnant corner of Nevada. Her flirtation with the foreman of the LX ranch, by the way, is wofully lacking in the very quality the author claims for her—dignity. The handsome foreman was afraid of the manager, all-powerful in the neighborhood, and a particularly offensive sort of Don Juan. The affair should have sufficed to disillusion the lady's Eastern suitor, but, instead, he forgave, after having produced all the romance the story contains. But it is the locality and atmosphere that matter in this book, and not its love story. The author describes well, her cowboys come up to expectation, and so do the Mexicans. There is an excellent report of the rough-and-ready trial of a man falsely accused of rustling, and a most entertaining farcical ending to the career of the manager of the ranch.

TARDY JUSTICE.

A DOUBTFUL CHARACTER. By Mrs. Baillie Reynolds. 12mo, pp. 361. The George H. Doran Company.

Mrs. Reynolds has the knack of making the old-fashioned heroine interesting in a modern setting. No abstruse present-day subtleties of psychological analysis for her, no perplexing problems, no purpose beyond that of trying her heroine in many cruel ways, of making her earn her ultimate happiness through many tears. Love is her theme, the old-fashioned love of many earlier English novels, which never doubts in adversity, which clings to the beloved in the face of appearances and revelations and the wise counsels and opposition of the world. It is certainly a doubtful character whom the girl in this story loves and decides to marry, a man of mystery who asks that she shall trust him, with never a question as to his past. And so the agony begins, and is piled up on her devoted head. The author is, furthermore, a clever craftswoman, who makes the most and the best of the material with which she deals, of minor characters, locality and atmosphere. The opening chapters of this story are good reading as a picture of Alpine climbing, and of the traits of character which the sport brings out on the arduous way and at the exhausted end of the day.

HIGH TREASON.

THE MAN INSIDE. By Natalie Sumner Lincoln. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 303. D. Appleton & Co.

THE SECRET OF THE NIGHT. Further Adventures of Rouletabille. By Gaston Leroux. 12mo, pp. 376. The Macaulay Company.

It is seldom that an American detective story deals with such vast interests as furnish the plot of "The Man Inside." Here are high treason, international espionage, and amazing revelations. We are at the centre of things, in Washington, at the State and Navy departments. The exposure of a conspiracy is stopped by murder; Colombian affairs are in a critical state; plans of super-Dreadnoughts are stolen; the ambassador of a great Oriental power is in such a hurry to leave the capital that his chauffeur breaks all the speed laws. Of course, the most dangerous and efficient of all international secret agents is a beautiful woman—in fiction, at least. This hint may be freely given to the prospective reader of the book, because, even though in possession of this bit of knowledge, he will have to read to the very end to know the dénouement. British military attachés may sometimes be deceived by appearances. It may be said here that the story is well invented and ingeniously worked out; that the author proves her ability throughout to handle so bold an international plot, and that she plays the games of false clews fairly with both her readers and her characters. A satisfactory story of its kind.

Rouletabille in Russia to prevent the assassination of General Trebassof by the Nihilists—this is the substance of the story of the French journalist-detective's new exploits. It is, of course, the Russia of melodrama, so delightfully, mysteriously crowded with daily danger of sudden death. Rouletabille scorns the Third Section; he knows that every secret agent may be a Nihilist, every Nihilist, a secret agent. Every servant may be a conspirator; even the general's wife and daughter may be traitors. This, indeed, proves to be the state of affairs: the mystery of the attempts upon the condemned man's life narrows down to these two. M. Leblanc is a patriot, so Long live the entente cordiale! Rouletabille, having solved the case with amazing fertility of resources, tells the Czar, on taking his leave, that the solution of the Russian problem lies in "progress and pity." And the Emperor, "in a state of exaltation," answers, "It is promised." He then makes Joseph Rouletabille, of "L'Epoque," an officer of the order of St. Anne of Russia and gives him the accolade. All St. Petersburg was at the station to see Joseph off and to cry "Vive la France! Vive la Russie!" Nevertheless, as the train approached the frontier Rouletabille threw himself back on the cushions and said "Ouf!" A most adventurous, altogether satisfying—not to say filling—narrative.

ILLUSTRATION by EVERETT SHINN from "THE SALAMANDER" by BOBBS-MERRILL CO.

DRAWING by JOHN T. McCUTCHEON FROM "ADE'S FABLES" DOUBLEDAY PAGE & CO.

DRAMA AND REVOLUTION

The Paris Stage Under the Reign of Terror.

A quaint, curious little book by M. Paul d'Estrée, "Paris Theatres During the Reign of Terror," supplies a great deal of picturesque and stirring information about the French stage—actors, actresses, theatrical managers, authors, dramatic critics and the public—during the exciting days of Jacobin despotism. People then went to the theatres not so much to see the plays as to assert their own political opinions. The Committee of Public Safety used the stage as a means of communicating the news of the day, doctored to suit its own ends. The comedies of Molière were proscribed as dangerous, and no plays were permitted unless they glorified revolutionary ideas. During the entr'actes agents of the committee often compelled the spectators to go down on their knees and chant the "Hymn to Liberty," after which the actors were forced to step forward to the footlights and proclaim the names of the men and women who had been beheaded during the past twenty-four hours on the Place de la Révolution. Immediately after these grim announcements a "number" would be given mimicking and ridiculing the imaginary contortions of the victims when their heads had been placed under the knife. The public was then called upon to shout "Vive la Guillotine!" and to sing in chorus the famous "Ca ira!" A few more political announcements would be made, and up would go the curtain for the next act of the play.

Among the actors thus compelled to recite the names of the guillotine's victims during the entr'actes were Talma and Molé. The entire company of the Théâtre Français was on several occasions locked up for the night in the Sainte-Pélagie prison because its members seemed to be lukewarm in playing the parts assigned to them by the Committee of Public Safety. On the other hand, the artists of the Opéra showed unbounded enthusiasm for the Jacobin leaders and went so far as, of their own accord, to make a bonfire of the archives and records of the Academy of Music. The duty of the dramatic critics consisted in writing diatribes against the plays of the old régime and in lauding to the skies the bombastic political lines idolizing the Jacobin leaders under names borrowed from the Greek classics. Strange to say, the theatres were well filled during the Reign of Terror, and some of the managers made plenty of money.

HERE AND THERE IN THE NEW BOOKS

An Ancient Eastern Tale and Its Many Variants—Fido and Inductive Reasoning—The Quality of the Early Translations of Tolstoy.

Among the many books on Tripoli that have appeared since the country's annexation by Italy there is one, "The New Tripoli," by Ethel Braun, of which so far no American edition has appeared. It deals not with the war of conquest but with the work of civilization already begun in the country. In her chapter on the legends, superstitions and spells of Tripolitania Miss Braun relates the following "true" story, which she had from an Arab woman:

> Once, one hundred and fifty years ago, before the time of the Turks, a rich Arab of high rank passed a beautiful Jewess in the street. He fell in love with her and said: "You are beautiful—you please me." But she refused, answering: "No, I am a true woman. I love my husband." Then he continued: "Give me a hair of your head as a remembrance." So she went into the house and took a long hair out of the sieve (these are often made of long hairs from the tail of a horse or cow), and gave it to him. In the night she and her husband were awakened by the noise of the sieve, which was bounding round the room and beating against the door. When they opened the door the sieve rolled out, away to the house of the Arab, who opened the gate with joy. But when he saw the sieve he knew that his spells had been in vain, for none are strong enough to break down a woman's love.

Many variants of this old tale of incantation are current in the Orient, the most telling of them all being the modern Dutch-Indian version, which substitutes the wife of a Dutch government official in Java for the Jewess, and a tiger skin for the sieve.

A LOGICIAN'S DOG

A Passage from a Clever Little Book.

Whether William Timothy Call, the author of a diminutive "Boy's Book on Logic: A Talk, Not a Treatise," considers logic an art, a science, or, with the late Professor Jowett, "a dodge," does not matter; suffice it to say that the elders of the boy will enjoy this clever little volume greatly. Mr. Call is strong on illustrations, and so, while discoursing on syllogisms, fallacies, abstractions, concepts and the like, he comes to tell us of his fox terrier Fido, which he trained to the utmost of its intellectual capacities:

> I did not stretch his powers beyond what I learned to regard as his normal limit. I gave up all hope of ever being able to teach him abstraction—that is, how to separate the qualities, properties, attributes of the things from the things themselves. In other words, sweetness or sourness were properties not to be separated in thought from the word milk by means of words. Milk was milk, and there was nothing else to be known about it except that it tasted good or bad.
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> As to conceptions (concepts in technical language) such as your "tree in general," Fido had no use for them, and did not understand them any better than we do. Induction was his favorite style of reasoning, and he indulged in it to excess. If cats walks, if there were birds in two or three bushes, he at once concluded by induction that all bushes had birds in them, and would run to every bush he might to test it by deduction.
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> Then Fido died. His master wrote his epitaph, imploring all logicians not to desecrate it:
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> All men are animals;
> Fido was an animal;
> Therefore Fido was a man.

WHITMANIANA

Walt Whitman's Complaints of Translators.

The many pages of the third bulky volume of Horace Traubel's monumental "With Walt Whitman in Camden" (Mitchell Kennerley) are studded, like those of its two predecessors, with the names of literary celebrities great and little, and with Whitman's pungent comments on their bearers and their works, often tinged, in the case of his contemporaries with frankest egotism. These volumes are not so much a biography as a sort of encyclopædic index of Whitman's mind, always readable, often most interesting, occasionally amusing in their malicious fervor. One dips here, there and elsewhere, invariably tempted to go deeper into this revelation of an exceptionally strong and aggressive personality, but for the moment quotes only Whitman's very just complaint of the deplorable quality of the early hurried translations of Tolstoy:

> "Tolstoy has been unfortunate in his translators: how much of his failure to impress me is owing to this I could not say; much I am sure was confident. 'The most wretched unreadable stuff has been palmed off on us as transcripts of the original . . . Wrestled with 'Anna Karenina': all my pondering failed to relieve it of its dulness.' Was it the fault of the translation? 'Yes—yes—it stared me in the face from every page. It sounded like a translation made by a man who started to translate the book before he had read it. The trouble is, the publishers are in such a devil of a hurry to get there: no matter how: disgracefully or honorably, either: but get there . . . Even Tourgenieff suffered from imbecile translations.'"